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ABSTRACT

This report details a project that explored the utility of adding a character development component to the academic curriculum for a correctional education program. In addition to the academic curriculum, a character component based on Steven Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" was taught to a demonstration group; only the academic curriculum was used with a control group. Staff and inmate observations and feedback were documented. The study found that academic gains of both the control group and the demonstration group were similar, as were composite attitude gains. However, the psychological self-attitude area showed sizable variation between groups. The control group exhibited a .83 loss whereas the demonstration group showed a 1.77 gain. The control group had 29 percent more early dropouts from the class. The study concluded that the project results do not justify the cost and time expenditure needed to implement the entire character component. However, the project did support adjustments to the curriculum to include segments on certain topics: paradigm and paradigm shifting, scripting and rescripting, proactivity and reactivity, and goal setting around roles. Feedback from staff and inmates was positive, although the small number of project participants did not allow for reliability of results. (KC)

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ED 395 102

A CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT IN A CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

1994-1995

Section 353 Final Report

Contract Number 098-5001
$15,923

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ABSTRACT

Title: A Character Development Component in a Correctional Education Curriculum

Project No.: 098-5001 Funding: $15,923.00

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Purpose: This project explored the utility of adding a character development component to the academic curriculum for a correctional education program.

Procedures: The general design explored: 1) academic gains, 2) seven categories of attitude gains, and 3) early separations. A pretest/posttest format was used. The control group was provided traditional academic instruction while the demonstration group received the same academic instruction with the addition of a character development component. Staff and inmate observations and feedback were also documented.

Summary of Findings: Academic gains of both the control group and the demonstration group were similar as were composite attitude gains. Only the psychological self attitude stem showed sizable variation between groups. The control group exhibited a .83 loss while the demonstration group showed a 1.77 gain. Early separations were 29% higher in the control group.
The project results do not justify the cost and time expenditure needed to implement the entire character component. However, the project did support adjustments to the curriculum to include segments on paradigm/ paradigm shifting, scripting/rescripting, proactivity/reactivity, and goal setting around roles.

Comments: Early separations and a lower than usual prison count caused posttested participant numbers to be too low for even nonparametric measures. However, feedback from staff and inmates and the promising scores from one attitude stem resulted in an adjusted curriculum for 1995-96. Additional projects are needed to further study the needs and effective curriculum strategies for ensuring healthy and productive attitudes in addition to knowledge and skill instruction in correctional education.

Products: Final Report.

Descriptors:(To be completed only by Bureau staff):

INTRODUCTION

This project proposed adding a character development component to the curriculum of a correctional education program. The project compared, contrasted and observed gains and attitude changes achieved in a traditional-type academic adult education curriculum with the gains and changes achieved when a structured character development segment was added to the traditional curriculum. The utility of adjusting the current curriculum to include academic knowledge, skills and attitude segments was the primary reason for the project.

The character development component was based on The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey. The program was adapted and implemented into a curriculum for inmates by Barbara Bart, project teacher; Phillip Shaffer, project counselor; Elaine Nagel, project director; and Angelo Pezzuolo, Executive Director.

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey was selected as the character building component based on its national recognition and merit. The American Quality Foundation president, Joshua Hammond, has rated Covey as one of the five most important contributors in shaping our next level of thinking in quality. The Covey Leadership Center's client portfolio includes 250 on the Fortune 500 companies as well as thousands of small and mid-sized companies, educational institutions, government and other organizations worldwide. The Seven Habits program builds on the adage "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime" by adding "Develop teachers of fishermen and you lift all society".

Habits are patterns of behavior that involve knowledge, skill and attitude. These are learned, therefore, they can be unlearned. The Seven Habits are interrelated and sequential.

They progress from dependence to independence in interdependence. The key premise is that timeless laws of cause and effect operate in personal effectiveness and human interactions. The Seven Habits are not based on externally imposed values, a particular religion, or a step by step quick fix practice. They are based on a personal effectiveness that develops from the inside out from needs shared by all humans. The Seven Habits are based on the following principles:[1]

1. The principle of continuous learning, of self-reeducation -- the discipline that drives us toward the values we believe in. Such constant learning is required in today's world, in light of the fact that many of us can expect to work in up to five radically different fields before we retire.
2. The principle of service, of giving oneself to others, of helping to facilitate other people's work.
3. The principle of staying positive and optimistic, radiating positive energy -- including avoiding the four emotional cancers (criticizing, complaining, comparing, and competing).
4. The principle of affirmation of others -- treating people as proactive individuals who have great potential.
5. The principle of balance -- the ability to identify our various roles and to spend appropriate amounts of time in, and focus on, all the important roles and dimensions of our life. Success in one area of our life cannot compensate for neglect or failure in other areas of our life.

1. Stephen R. Covey, Living the Seven Habits - Applications and Insights (Provo, Utah: Covey Leadership Center, 1992), pp. 8

6. The principle of spontaneity and serendipity -- the ability to experience life with a sense of adventure, excitement, and fresh rediscovery, instead of trying to find a serious side to things that have no serious side.

7. The principle of consistent self-renewal and self-improvement in the four dimensions of one's life: physical, mental, spiritual, and social-emotional.

The traditional academic portion of the curriculum included units on:

Reading Comprehension

Reading Vocabulary

Writing Skills/Grammar

Writing for Communication

Math Concepts

Math Computation

Problem Solving

Critical Thinking

The project was conducted in the Butler County Prison during the 1994-95 school year. Warden Gigliotti and the prison staff strongly supported and encouraged the project.

A review of the literature showed that the fasted growing group in the United States in the 1980's was prisoners, growing 139 percent, from fewer than half a million to 1.1 million. Eighty-two percent of the prisoners were high school drop outs. According to H. Hodgkinson in Demographic Look at Tomorrow (1992), the United States now has a higher proportion of the population behind bars than any other nation. A black male here is seven times more likely to go to jail than a black male in South Africa.

Use of the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People in a correctional institution has been informally explored by Kenneth Banner and Karim Rakim at Northeast Correctional Center in Mountain City, Tennessee. Their observations were positive and supported further exploration.

Dissemination sources and permanent copies of this project are on file at The Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs, AdvancE, and The Western Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Resource Center.

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333 Market Street, 12th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

AdvancE Literacy Resource Center
333 Market Street, 11th Floor
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Western PA Adult Literacy Resource Center
5347 William Flynn Highway, Rt. 8
Gibsonia, PA 15044-9644

PROJECT REPORT

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project was to determine if character training as a component of the academic instruction curriculum makes a difference in an adult education program with an incarcerated population.

Project objectives included:

1. To identify any academic gains on the post test between the control group and the demonstration group.
2. To identify any attitude changes on the post survey between the control group and the demonstration group.
3. To obtain written teacher and counselor observations for both control and demonstration groups.
4. To obtain feedback regarding the perceived effectiveness of the demonstration curriculum from the prison staff and inmates.
5. To further the movement of adult basic education to an efficient and effective holistic program based on verifiable data.

The proposal addressed the addition of a structured character development segment, namely The Seven Habits of High Effective People, into the traditional curriculum. The competencies developed in the Seven Habits segment included:

1. To understand paradigms and paradigm shifts.
2. To demonstrate the importance of making deposits in people's emotional bank accounts.

3. To develop strategies to be more proactive and less reactive.

4. To understand the principles of personal leadership.

5. To write a personal mission statement.

6. To incorporate the skills of personal management.

7. To utilize the skills of empathic communication.

8. To construct a plan for personal fitness in the physical, mental, emotional-social, and spiritual areas of life.

PROCEDURES

The prison staff referred inmates for corrections education services. All referred participants received a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) complete diagnostic battery and a Bloom Sentence Completion Attitude Survey. An interview between the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV staff and the participant reviewed testing results and established an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) based on the participant's perceived needs and the testing data.

Referred participants for the first 3½ months of the project were assigned to a control group. This group received instruction with the traditional academic curriculum used by Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV in regular corrections education. The control group was instructed in the academic curriculum consisting of:

Reading Comprehension

Reading Vocabulary

Writing Skills/Grammar

Writing for Communication

Math Concepts

Math Computation

Problem Solving

Critical Thinking

The level of instruction was determined by the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) based on the TABE diagnostic scores. Sessions were held two times a week for 1½-2 hours each session. Students were post tested with the TABE survey and the Bloom Sentence Completion Attitude Survey. An exit interview was held by the counselor to discuss and

review results and assess further need.

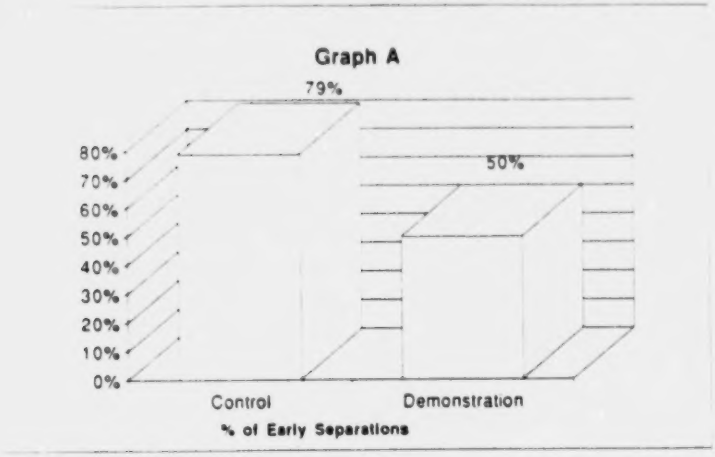
In December, January and February, the project coordinator provided staff development training for the teaching and counseling staff for The Seven Habits character development component. The training covered both content and process.

Starting in February, all referred prison inmates were placed in the demonstration group. They received the same testing (pre and post), initial interviews, IEP development, academic instruction and exit interviews as the control group. In addition, the demonstration group received structured character development instruction via the Seven Habits format.

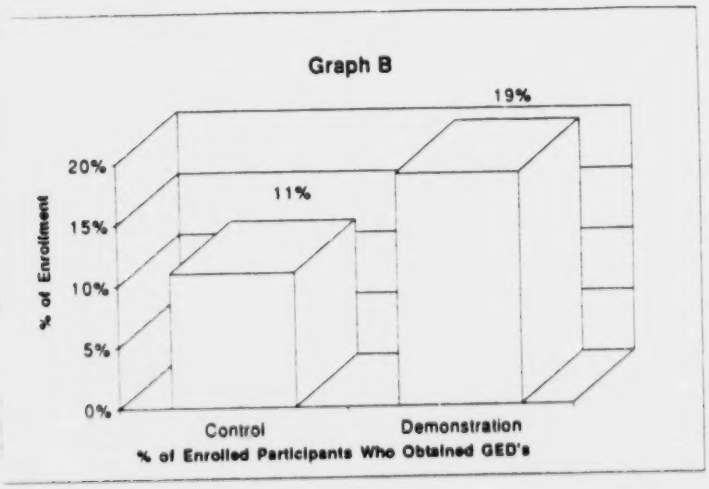
The project was planned to provide useful feedback on the effectiveness of adding a character development segment to the academic curriculum in correctional facilities. Detailed statistical analysis was beyond the scope of this project. Teacher and counselor observations along with pre and post attitude surveys and academic gains were summarized for information and insights to strengthen the Adult Basic Education program.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

ACADEMIC



Academic gains were very similar between the control group (1.9 GEq average) and the demonstration group (2.1 GEq average). Both the control and demonstration groups produced an average gain of .032 GEq per hour of instruction. However, the demonstration group had less early separations (50% for demonstration group vs 79% for the control group, Graph A). The control group had a GED attainment of 11% while the demonstration group GED yield was 19%. (Graph B)



ATTITUDES

BLOOM SENTENCE COMPLETION SURVEY SCORES

Attitude Toward	Control Group N = 6		Control Group N = 13	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	mean score	mean score	mean score	mean score
People	-1.167 negative	.167	-2.077 negative	-1.077 negative
Physical Self	833	2.5	.385	.615
Family	-.333 negative	1.167	.308	.615
Psychological Self	1.333	-.5 negative	-1.923 negative	-.154 negative
Self-Directedness	667	2.833	.692	1.692
Work	.167	.333	1.154	1.846
Accomplishment	2.0	3.167	1.538	2.692
Composite	**3.5**	**9.67**	**.08**	**6.23**

There were large composite gains for both the control group and the demonstration group (Chart 1). There was considerable variation between the seven (7) attitude stem categories on the Bloom Sentence Completion Survey. Possible score range was from -5 to +5 points.

Stem 1. **People**

The purpose of these stem items is to facilitate the subject indicating the degree he has favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward his age mates.[1]

Result: Both groups scored negative attitudes in the pre test (control -1.167/ demonstration -2.077). Both groups made the same average gain in the post test.

[1] Wallace Bloom, Bloom Sentence Completion Survey (Chicago, IL.: Stanting, 1980), pp.2-3

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Stem 2. **Physical Self**

The purpose of these stem items is to elicit responses which may collectively indicate how the subject subjectively perceived his own body image, physical appearance and attributes.[1]

Result: Both groups showed gain, with the control group gaining 1.67 points, the demonstration group .23 points.

Stem 3. **Family**

The purpose of these stem items is to facilitate the subject revealing what first comes to his mind in association with key family members, and the family now and in the past.[1]

Result: Both groups scored gains in the post survey with the control group out distancing the demonstration group 1.5 to .31.

Stem 4. **Psychological Self**

The purpose of these stem items is to facilitate the subject's revealing his own concept of himself as regard to thoughts, values, and psychological aspects. The degree of self-acceptance is expressed by the net score of favorable and negative (unfavorable responses), feelings of inferiority or superiority, skills mastered or desired.1

Result: This stem produced the greatest variation. Both pre and post surveys for the demonstration revealed negative scores (-1.923 and -.154 respectively) but the group had a 1.77 gain compared with a .83 loss for the control group. This was an interesting result as the 7 Habit curriculum begins with an inside-out approach starting with self. It was this portion of the 7 Habits curriculum that the project staff considered the most useful for the inmates.

[1] Wallace Bloom, Bloom Sentence Completion Survey (Chicago, IL: Stoelting, 1980), pp 2-3

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Stem 5. **Self-Directedness**

The purpose of these stem items is to stimulate responses that will indicate the subject's feelings about being self-directed rather than other-directed, and to the degree of freedom he has or desired to be autonomous (or to what extent he enjoys autonomy). It may also include a measure of the extent the authority figures in his life delegate decision making to him.[1]

Result: The control group made greater gains than the demonstration group 2.17 to 1.0 respectively.

Stem 6. **Work**

The purpose of these stem items is to facilitate the subject's revealing his attitudes toward specific features and elements of his work activities and environment. Feelings towards supervisors are sought and these may relate to the subject's attitude towards Self-Directedness. Attitudes may include job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, positive or negative feelings toward work associates, subordinates, equipment and goals.[1]

Result: The demonstration group made greater survey gains than the control group .69 compared to .17.

Stem 7. **Accomplishment**

The purpose of these stem items is that they were constructed and selected to reveal significant data concerning the strength or weakness of the subject's need for achievement. The net total suggests in a limited way what he would like to accomplish or considers important. Goals may be related to achievement, material possessions, emotional satisfactions, or self-improvement.[1]

Result: Both groups made similar gains 1.7 for the control group and 1.15 for the demonstration group.

[1] Wallace Bloom, Bloom Sentence Completion Survey (Chicago, IL: Stoelting, 1980), pp. 2-3

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INMATE RESPONSES

Documented examples of inmate comments included:

"This program helped me to understand my situation with my family better".

"I didn't want to be in the program at first but it really helped me and I feel a lot better about myself".

"The program helped me focus what really is important to me and what was not".

"I think that every inmate should be able to go to the program so that they have had an opportunity to help themselves".

There were no negative comments from inmates registered with the project staff.

PROJECT STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The project teacher and counselor observations of the demonstration group suggested:

1. The age of the students appeared to make a difference as to how open the student was to receive the information.
2. The student that had a family put more effort into the class and thrived on the information to better understand how they could help themselves.
3. The behavior of the students improved in the jail setting while they were attending the program.
4. Students were interested in the classes and participated well.
5. It appeared that the students that were in the program did better in the

GED classes than prior to entering the program. The students would work on their own.

6. The self-esteem of the students improved greatly.

7. Local inmates (Butler County) were more interested than out of county inmates.

8. It appeared to be more beneficial to have shorter classes more often than to run longer classes.

9. The students also appeared to learn more in the first four steps compared to the last three.

10. The program correlates well with the other prison programs.

11. Considerable "out of class" inmate conversation was spent discussing what was introduced in the 7 Habits class.

BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

The jail count was unusually low for most of the project period. A larger than average numbers of inmates were assigned to House Arrest during the 1994-95 year. Therefore, the number of actual project participants was less than the number of projected participants.

Sudden inmate discharges before posttesting has been a traditionally troublesome occurrence in our programs. Therefore, we employed a Treatment Supervisor for the Butler Prison as project counselor in hopes of reducing the number of early separations. Despite genuine effort by the counselor, this action did not eliminate or even reduce the number of early separation. The control group pretested 28 but were able to posttest only six or 21%. The demonstration group pretested 26 and posttested on 13 or 50%. This made the numbers too small for even a nonparametric statistical analysis.

Length of observation time with both groups was too short to check for long term attitude change or goal attainment. In addition, the project time frame did not permit follow-up.

EVALUATION

While the project numbers were very disappointing, and therefore inconclusive in terms of significance, there were several valuable learnings revealed in the effort, namely:

1. The topic is relevant and warrants further exploration. Long term studies which permit time for follow-up are needed.
2. The attitude stem dealing with psychological self, which showed a .83 decrease in attitude from positive to negative in the control group but a 1.77 gain in the demonstration group, justifies more investigation.
3. The project results do not justify the cost and time expenditure to implement the complete 7 Habits into our adult education curriculum.
4. We gleaned enough support from this project to adjust our curriculum to include segments on:

   paradigms/paradigms shifting

   scripting/rescripting

   proactivity/reactivity

   goal setting around roles

Formation or reformation of healthy and productive habits require skill, knowledge and attitude. We found inmates to be as open to guided self analysis of their attitudes as they are to academic instruction for a GED. Therefore, we will begin to in-service staff and adjust curriculum to implement these segments in the 1995-96 program.

MIU IV wishes to acknowledge and thank the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education for the opportunity to explore the need for a character development component in our correctional education curriculum.